

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-52 (cancelled).

53 (new): A system for playing a game of chance, comprising:

a plurality of networked gaming machines,

each gaming machine of the plurality of gaming machines being adapted for playing a primary game and a bonus game and being adapted to randomly determine an outcome in play of the primary game, the bonus game initiated upon the occurrence of a challenge from another player already qualified to participate in the bonus game and comprising a simulated contest against at least one opponent,

each gaming machine of the plurality of gaming machines including at least one bonus game initiation input engageable by a challenged player to perform one of accepting the challenge, whereupon the bonus game is initiated, and rejecting the challenge, whereupon a quantity of credits are debited from the challenged player and credited to the another player; and

each gaming machine of the plurality of gaming machines including at least one bonus game input engageable by a player to select a bonus game character to represent the player in the simulated contest against the at least one opponent, and to modify one or more aspects of the bonus game character by selecting bonus game character elements from a library of available bonus game character elements.

54 (new): The system of claim 53, the at least bonus game input of each gaming machine of the plurality of gaming machines being engageable by a player to select a team on which the bonus game character participates in the simulated contest.

55 (new): The system of claim 53, wherein selected bonus game characters of at least two gaming machines of the plurality of gaming machines define a first team of bonus game characters and selected bonus game characters of at least two other gaming machines of the plurality of gaming machines define a second team of bonus game characters, the first team of bonus game characters competing against the second team of bonus game characters in the simulated contest.

56 (new): The system of claim 55, wherein the plurality of gaming machines comprises at least first and second banks of gaming machines, each bank of gaming machines including at least two gaming machines, and wherein the first team is defined by selected bonus game characters of the at least two gaming machines in the first bank of gaming machines and the second team is defined by selected bonus game characters of the at least two gaming machines in the second bank of gaming machines.

57 (new): The system of claim 55, wherein the plurality of gaming machines comprises gaming machines at at least first and second gaming locations, each gaming location including at least two gaming machines, and wherein the first team is defined by selected bonus game characters of the at least two gaming machines at the first gaming location and the second team is defined by selected bonus game characters of the at least two gaming machines at the second gaming location.

58 (new): The system of claim 55, wherein the first and second teams each have an associated progressive jackpot, and a portion of winnings realized when one of the selected bonus game characters of the first team defeats one of the selected bonus game characters of the second team in the simulated contest is credited to the associated progressive jackpot of the first team.

59 (new). The system of claim 53, wherein an outcome of the simulated contest is randomly determined.

60 (new). The system of claim 53, wherein each of the bonus game character elements available for selection provides a player's selected character with different competitive advantages as compared to other of the bonus game character elements, whereby a player's selection of one or more of the bonus game character elements allows the player to improve the player's probability of winning the simulated contest.

61 (new): The system according to claim 53, the at least one bonus game input engagable by a player to select the bonus game character from a library of available bonus game characters.

62 (new): The system according to claim 53, the at least one bonus game input engagable by a player to select the bonus game character selected in a previous bonus game.

63 (new): The system according to claim 53, wherein the opponent comprises another bonus game character.

64 (new): The system according to claim 63, wherein the simulated contest comprises a simulation of combat.

65 (new): The system according to claim 64, wherein the simulated contest comprises a visual representation on a display of the simulation of combat.

66 (new): The system according to claim 65, wherein the simulated contest comprises a substantially continuous display of competition to provide a visual perception of being ongoing.

67 (new): The system according to claim 64, wherein the bonus game character and the simulation of combat are structured from a selection of modular components.

68 (new): The system according to claim 53, wherein the simulated contest comprises a gladiatorial-type contest.

69 (new): The system according to claim 53, wherein the simulated contest comprises a display of physical competition between an offensive character and a defensive character.

70 (new): The system according to claim 53, wherein the primary game comprises at least one of reel-type slot machine games, card games, keno games, lotto games, and bingo games.

71 (new): The system according to claim 53, wherein each gaming machine includes a random number generator.

72 (new): The system according to claim 53, wherein the player is also provided an opportunity to play the bonus game upon the occurrence of at least one bonus game trigger event, the at least one bonus game trigger event comprising at least one of a randomly timed bonus trigger event, a specified outcome in the primary game, and use of a specified number of credits to buy into the bonus game.